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ABSTRACT

These four papers address the issue of vocational education versus general education in the community college. Dale Tillery rejects the career versus general education dichotomy and builds a case for synthesis of the two, discussing as possible threats to general education the following: ethnocentrism, academicism, departmentalism, skepticism, and elitism. Louis Batemale looks at the relationship between career training and general education from three perspectives: historical, current, and future. John H. Porterfield identifies six reasons for the current low status of general education in the community colleges and makes the following recommendations. (1) abandon the idea that there is one best solution to the problem; (2) emphasize the common content of general and career education courses; (3) reexamine the assumption that general education must precede vocational and professional education; (4) emphasize teaching quality. Earl Lowell recognizes an implicit prejudice in the educational system regarding career education. To correct this he recommends a change in attitude among college administrators which might generate an alternative to the concept of the career ladder. (NHM)

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PERSPECTIVES

on

The Church and the Community College

Paper Number Nine

CAREER EDUCATION AND ELITISM

By:
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John Porterfield, Earl Lowell

UNITED MINISTRIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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CAREER EDUCATION AND ELITISM

DR. DALE TILLERY

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The title "Career Education and Elitism" may be as enigmatic to the reader as it is to those of us who conceived this publication. So let me share its derivation by way of introduction to the thoughtful papers by Louis Batmale, Earl Lowell, and John Porterfield. I believe they will stimulate you to think anew about the education of community college students. Quite candidly the four of us are not an unbiased group in the continuing national debate about the relative emphasis which should be placed on liberal/general education and vocational education in community colleges. We will not agree on many issues, but I think it fair to say that we do not seek to bury general education, but to praise it. Those of us who selected the authors, at the request of the United Ministries in Higher Education, could have chosen vigorous spokesmen for "pure" vocationalism in the two-year colleges. Some of these advocates are convinced that general education at the college level is dead. A strong summation of this point of view was expressed by Lyman Glenny in his controversial article "The 1960's in Reverse."[1]

> Our trends indicate that young people are not going to be "mended" by colleges and universities, and rather than be stitched and laced with liberal arts, (they) are turning to institutions whose programs are more responsive to their needs.

This observation is brought home when Glenny says the "junior colleges are revising curriculums to delete some liberal arts courses and to offer more short, updated, and retraining courses in technical and business fields." Such trends are clearly visible in community college curricula and enrollments, but they leave the two-year colleges open to charges of collusion with elitist in American higher education. Glenny goes on to say that, "each institution can educate only those students for which the institution has unique capabilities." Can you find the community colleges in this schema?

ILLNESS OF GENERAL EDUCATION

If we were to accept this interpretation of events we might ask the question "who killed general education?" But since we are unlikely to agree with the Cassandras of higher education the question can be rephrased: What is the nature of the illness of general education?, and what are its causes? But before I offer a brief response to these questions, it seems important to suggest some definitions for which there is by no means universal agreement.

First, I will continue to use the hyphenated term <u>liberal/general education</u> to refer to those formal and informal learning experiences which develop the big skills--the skills of understanding oneself and ones fellow men; of making sense out of the ever expanding and changing flow of knowledge about the physical and biological universe, and of the beliefs and values of

diverse peoples; and finally of identifying with the creative work of all mankind. An essential dimension of this education, I believe, is awareness of the spacious present which weaves together the past, present and future.

The idea of intrinsically valued liberal education has lost favor not only because students have rejected learning which is not directed to action, but because programs of liberal arts have neglected or demeaned, as Martin Myerson has pointed out, the "instrumental, the utilitarian, the professional--and ethical."

The term general education which gained currency in the 1950s has always distressed me because it has led to blatant relativism. Almost anything can be passed off as general education and the result has been bewilderment among students and faculty alike about what general education really is. This approach, I believe, has led to a growing anti-intellectualism in education.

ALL EDUCATION IS CAREER EDUCATION

The key concept in this set of papers is Career Education and I am tempted to advocate the notion that all education is career education. Perhaps I can sneak around that pitfall by stressing the mutuality between education for continuing productivity as a worker, and liberal learning. Robert Frost may have saved me when he wrote:

My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one
And the work is play for mortal stakes
Is the deed ever really done,
For heaven and the futures' sakes.

THREATS TO BROAD EDUCATION

Like my co-authors I reject the dichotomy of career education vs liberal learning and will defer to them in building the case for synthesis in the new education for survival. On the other hand I believe that threats to broad education for working and living are profound and that I can further our shaping of the problem by quickly suggesting the forces that threaten the integrity of comprehensive education in American community colleges. For brevity's sake I will state them as caveats:

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism. Both the liberal arts and general education traditions have been culture bound. The emphasis on western science, institutions, and creativity has been incongruent with cultural pluralism in American society; as well as with the emergence of a new world order and interdependence among nations. So-called ethnic studies have come, have been isolated, and have gone with little effect on general education programs. Curriculum reform is long overdue in abandoning ethnocentrism which is anathema to liberal/general education.

Academicism

Academicism. With rare exceptions general education offerings have been canned with academic preservatives of one sort or another. They have not been

appetizing fare for students generally and certainly not for the "now" oriented students who make up the vast majority of our student bodies. The great issues of general education are alive in the homes, communities, and working places of college students.

Departmentalism

Departmentalism. The big skills I referred to in my definition of liberal-general education require syntheses, integrations, fitting the pieces together. Departmental dominance in matters of curriculum has led to near-universal sampling of separate introductory course to the several disciplines in meeting general education requirements. The result is not a conflict between two worlds of thought, but of many--with no arena and little guidance in helping students put the pieces together. In many colleges there are no general education programs as such, but a mass of unrelated courses. John Porterfield will make more of this charge.

Skepticism

Skepticism. The loss of faith in knowledge as a basis for values and for behavior, which characterizes a major tradition in modern philosophical thought, is widely reflected in the beliefs of contemporary students and teachers alike. In its benign manifestations this world-view leads to the conviction that one idea is as good as another; and in its extreme form to "know nothingness." I also suspect that this mind-set helps explain the reluctance of faculties to make choices and set priorities about what is important in education--thus our laissez-faire

approach to education. It seems possible that we can find our way back to faith in knowledge and thus to the renewal of liberal-general education. Those of you who have read the writings of Charles Collins know that he has not lost his faith. He can say such things as:

RENEWAL OF LIBERAL-GENERAL EDUCATION

- Some knowledge is more crucial for everybody to know than other knowledge.
- If human survival and/or planet survival is in jeopardy, then every college must be a college for survival.
- To give priority to education for manhood, over training for manpower is only to affirm the truism that the whole is greater than any one part.

These postulates for community college education demonstrate faith in the power of knowledge in the derivation of educational values and in the will to act in building them into curriculum and instruction.

Elitism. The open door colleges are filled with closed doors. Like most caveats, this one is too simplistic, but I believe has much truth. Perhaps with the best of intentions and in response to the staggering diversity of community college student, students are culled and channelled into segregated paths--not just in courses related to their vocational choices, but in ful-

CLOSED DOORS

filling whatever the colleges require for general education. It's hard not to believe that what results is a form of elitism. The "haves" end up with far richer experiences in the domain of liberal learning which are legitimatized by the selective and senior colleges and universities. The "have nots" end up with what many faculty themselves call "watered down" learning, little if any of which has common currency elsewhere in higher education.

COOLING OUT PROCESS

Now I am in a dilemma! What many community colleges do, in contrast to what they aspire to do, leaves them open to the charges of being patsies to educational elitists. Even this is a defensive statement, because the so-called "cooling out" process which Burton Clark associated with community college education would suggest that two-year colleges are active culprits in channelling off the poor and under-educated into short-term education and, thus, serving as screening agents for the selective public and private universities. But it's not quite that simple. In rejecting certain assumptions about the cooling out process, I believe that the comprehensive, counseling-oriented community college should take pride in providing arenas and guidance for students to explore career and educational alternatives--and

CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES

to change directions when appropriate. The vectors of change are many, but we are most aware of the students who shift from pre-transfer education to occupational and semi-professional programs, some short-term and others leading to associate degrees. Some social critics seem unable to distinguish this decision-making process from an elitist conspiracy to "dead end" a large portion of the new students to higher education. Furthermore, America's emerging state systems of equal access in higher education are based on diverse institutions whose programs and admission policies are articulated so that students may use whole systems of colleges and universities over time as determined by their own interests and learning readiness.

CHARGES OF ELITISM . BASED ON FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Some of the charges of elitism against our state systems of postsecondary education are based, I believe, on faulty assumptions and evidence. A number of sociologists (Jenks, Reisman, and Karabel) charge the community colleges, as the foundation institutions of such open-access systems, with failure to stimulate and to educate students for vertical movement and pursuit of baccalaureate degrees and beyond. In short the argument goes that the community colleges (and by implication the open-access state systems) are failing to bring about social mobility and are contributing to rigid social class structure in American society. Among the evidence used to defend such an interpretation is that the Western Region of the United States, with its massive community college systems, produces

the lowest ratio of A.B. degrees for its college-age youth than any other region; while the Eastern seaboard, with much less commitment to public community colleges, produces the highest ratio of baccalaureates.

One can interpret this interesting fact in several ways. But when Karabel uses it to fault the community colleges, I believe he makes a number of questionable assumptions. First, he assumes a status quo in the relationship between formal educational attainment and economic measures of social class. However, the contemporary lifestyles of highly skilled workers and technicians are incongruent with traditional classifications of social class. Equally vulnerable is the underlying assumption about patterns of college going. Going to college is no longer so time-bound as Karabel seems to believe. The technician of today may prepare for engineering tomorrow; the nursing aide may return to college for teacher preparation once her children are in school. Recurring education is the name of the game.

But the charge which cannot be so easily dismissed is that short-term vocational training may be so void of education for the big skills that many students never have the opportunity to develop an informed basis for free choice in pursuing self-knowledge and the full development of their talents and skills. The results may, indeed

be dead-end education, not only in relationship to personal fulfillment but for work itself. The following papers engage these issues and do, I believe, contribute substantially to the emerging debate about career education and liberal/general education in American community colleges.

[1]Unpublished paper, Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.

PERSPECTIVES: HISTORICAL-CURRENT-FUTURE

DR. LOUIS BATMALE

Dr. Batmale is Chancellor of the San Francisco Community College District, San Francisco California

The title assigned to this paper is a puzzling one and I, too, had problems with its proper interpretation. Career education is what the Community Colleges have been doing well for many years. Elitism is a term generally used when discussing access - it is the antithesis of the established Community College position of being the Open Door, equal opportunity institution.

As I reflect on this title, the message that seems to come through is:

"That Community Colleges advising students to enter career training programs are somehow stifling their intellectual, personal and social development."

"That that portion of our offerings labeled liberal arts or general education have a higher status than career training and that students in those areas are the Community College elite."

This position is not a new one. It has been under discussion ever since the junior colleges were established and will continue to be a lively topic for many years to come. It certainly won't be settled today.

I feel that I can contribute most to this study by looking at the relationship between career training and general-liberal education from three perspectives.

1. An historical perspective.
2. A current perspective
3. A future perspective

In the beginning most of the junior college students were part of what is

now described as flow-recent high school graduates generally ineligible for matriculation at four-year college majoring in lower division subject. Some, usually the least promising, majored in vocational subjects.

The decision to major in a vocational field was made after some directive counseling with a heavy reliance on measurement through interest and aptitude testing. The practice was to delay the career decision by keeping the student in general education and a university program as long as he showed promise of success. General education and vocational education were thought to be sequential. The students career decision was felt to be irrevocable and constituted a firm commitment to abandon forever the pursuit of a college degree.

TRADE SCHOOL MODEL

Early occupational programs were modeled on those existing in trade schools and as a result were developed with the help of an advisory committee with representation from labor and management. They were terminal and prepared for entry level positions. The potential upward mobility in the chosen career field for the occupational major was not then realized or even considered.

The programs were campus based although even then in some programs work experience was provided at the job site. Junior colleges were two-year institutions, therefore, most programs were designed to last two years. In settings where the junior colleges had evolved from trade schools, occupational programs of shorter duration were found.

The career programs were held in low esteem by faculty, parents, and students. Instructors were credentialed under Smith Hughes certification and their second class status was more real then imagined being reflected in their salary and working conditions.

GENERAL EDUCATION IN JUNIOR COLLEGE

General education was incorporated in the early junior college programs so as to distinguish them from trade school programs. The pioneers recognized the obligation to provide education for personal development and even then looked on general and occupational as partners in the education of the whole student.

BREACH BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL FACULTY

A number of general education courses were mandated for those seeking as Associate in Arts degree; these were prescribed by statute or administrative decision or both. Some schools mandated a general education core of some twenty or thirty units. This procedure widened the breach between academic and occupational faculties since it reduced that portion of the curriculum devoted to occupational education. It usually failed to produce the desired mini-Renaissance man because it imposed general education on not too interested students who were taught by faculty whose enthusiasm for the chore paralled that of the students enrolled in their classes.

In spite of all this, career education persisted, grew and gained greater acceptance. The present respected status of career education testifies as to the effectiveness of the ground work laid by our early

junior college leaders. For this we are indebted to them.

Present Perspective

The occupational student of today is better informed about his career field. He may have even started his program in a high school, in a business or industrial art program or a program especially designed to articulate with one in the Community College such as Feast or Pre-Tech.

PRESENT PERSPECTIVE

He may be flowing through school or may be re-entering from the general population. On our City College of San Francisco campus we have identified 500 students holding college degrees usually in liberal arts now majoring in photography, horticulture, allied health and other programs leading to interesting and profitable careers.

The current student recognizes his right to choose his career; the decision is his. It has been reached with some counseling of a less directive nature by a professional counselor who is too often unjustly maligned. The counseling may have taken place in high school, on campus, or in one of the community agencies that are increasing in number, providing such services. We are becoming increasingly aware that guiding students in these decisions is no longer the exclusive province of the campus staff.

RIGHT OF STUDENT TO CHOOSE

Present occupational programs as might be expected are improved. This is due to the greater experience of the staff and the increased cooperation of labor and management who through experience with some of the

program graduates have come to respect the quality or preparation of their products. They are generally well planned and in many colleges reflect quite closely the employment pattern of the community they serve. Experience has demonstrated that although they generally prepare for entry positions, there is ample opportunity for upward mobility. Graduates advance rapidly to supervisory and mid-management positions.

OPEN-ENDED PROGRAMS

They are open ended, not terminal. Graduates in increasing number find their way into bachelor degree curriculums. Experience has shown that many of the students when involved in relevant studies are turned on and achieve on a level not previously attained. An extensive follow up of graduates of our Hotel and Restaurant program showed that twenty-five percent attained college degrees which is about the same number as achieved by transfer aspirants.

Four-year institutions seeking to increase career options for students are making continuing education more attractive by providing majors in areas such as Engineering Technology and Allied Health. Our own San Francisco State University has developed a Design and Industry curriculum that allows the City College occupational major to add to his community college units a related upper division program leading to a bachelor degree.

The programs are campus based but because of the greater acceptance more

off-campus experiences are provided and in most programs a bridge between the college and the job is provided by meaningful industry based work experience. The poorest kept secret is that community college students are no longer two year students. On the one hand many are taking five, six and even seven semesters to complete their occuptional curriculum and on the other, more mature and better prepared students are completing their preparation in one year or less.

Career programs are developing their own elite. Many are well paid executives, supervisors, department heads and very successful self-employed entrepreneurs.

General education for self-development is still an important part of the occupational curriculum. It is generally no longer mandated. We learned through bitter experience during the campus disturbances of the 60's that students had a right to make decisions relative to their own education. As a result, imposed course requirements have given way to breathe requirements providing students with multiple options in each area. Flexible provisions make it possible to excuse older students or those with previous college from these requirements. We are no longer upset if a student forfeits graduation by electing to not meet any general education requirements or developing his own program for self development.

GENERAL EDUCATION FOR SELF DEVELOPMENT

The traditional sequence of having liberal education precede career training is no longer sacrosanct. We are comfortable having career training precede or parallel

general education. We are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that much of the personal and social developments that were formerly believed to result only from general education take place, and for some more effectively, in occupational programs. It is possible in an occupational program to develop one's ability to think, to make judgments, to discriminate, to communicate effectively and to improve skills in human relations.

I always found it rewarding to take visitors into a program designed for the less verbal students, dental technology for example, and ask one of these students to guide the visitors through the laboratory communicating effectively and enthusiastically the nature and extent of their program. It were as though through this relevant experience they had received the "Gift of Tongues."

Finally, we realize that the process of personal as well as career development is a continuing one. People, the environment, and jobs change, the body of knowledge and information continue to explode. General and career education is now and will continue to be a lifelong process.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Future Perspective

High school graduates will continue to flow into the Community Colleges. However, as we come to learn to better serve those who are described as "new learners" they will come in greater number. Our enrollment will be swelled by adults re-entering the educational mainstream. We will address ourselves to the educational needs

of all adults including the educationally and economically disenfranchised and the many handicapped adults. For example, we are presently exploring the establishment of a career program for the mentally retarded, preparing them for routine tasks in laundries.

The process of assisting in career decisions will be less institutional. The necessary information about one's self and available opportunities will come from many directions. Community based counseling centers and agencies will assume a greater role, the media already is starting to provide better career information.

Career education will be more tailored to the special need of the client. At one end of the pole we will develop short term programs preparing for a specific job, retraining others who are employed in special skills or for new tasks. In cooperation with CETA, we have developed a pre-committed job program in banking. The student is promised a specific job on completion of a training contract of approximately sixteen weeks. The immediate promise of a job has increased the staying power of the educationally and economically disadvantaged and has resulted in a very high retention rate. Expanding technologies will lead us to break the two-year barrier and offer three and four year curriculums in fields such as allied health, court reporting and engineering technology. Education will become less circumscribed by time frames. Credit, certificates and degrees will become less

CAREER EDUCATION WILL BE MORE TAILORED

important as both career and general education come to be recognized as a life-time process. Education will be entered, interrupted and re-entered as needed.

Courses and programs will be taken where people live and work - ghettos, barios, industrial parks, downtown and civil service centers.

Students will assume greater responsibilities designing their own program for self development, for intellectual growth and for aesthetic enjoyment. The role of curriculum committees and administrators will change - they will be less likely to prescribe the approximate dosage of general education.

The explosion of knowledge, information and learning material will cause us to reconsider the value of breathe requirements. We may think more in terms of longitudinal requirements allowing students to pursue in greater depth one discipline such as art, music or psychology. We will probably recommend in depth study of an interdisciplinary nature, allowing students to address themselves to problems such as population, energy and environment.

WE ARE A PLURALISTIC NATION

In planning we will recognize that we as Americans have a common heritage but we will better recognize that we are a pluralistic nation with a very diverse population. That each group has its unique heritage. That if they are to achieve the desired self-acceptance and personal development they must be afforded an opportunity to study and understand their differences. It is just as important to

the Filipino, the Latino, the Chinese or the Black to develop their understanding as it was to me to study French as the son of immigrant parents. In this context ethnic studies will become an equal and integral component of liberal studies.

We will recognize that personal, social and intellectual development are not our exclusive province; that the schools are but one agent in the process. TV will become an increasingly important contributor producing more programs such as Civilisation and the Ascent of Man. The radio, the library, the museums, the art gallery and the bookstore will be accepted as partners.

THE TRUE ELITE

The true elite will be those who are leading a full and satisfying life, those who have a feeling of importance and worth. Career education is certainly not alien to this goal.

GENERAL EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

DR. JOHN H. PORTERFIELD

Dr. John Porterfield is a distinguished teacher emeritus at Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, California

The president of Johns Hopkins University, reflecting on the current collegiate confusion and demoralization, recently wrote: "The nasty and frightening question nobody wants to ask or answer concerns the purpose of higher education. If the basic purpose of post secondary education is vocational, then much of higher education in America today is wasteful irrelevance. If the basic purpose is something else, then it (whatever it is) is not being accomplished by American higher education. Even an accepted definition is lacking." It is against the background of this degree of confusion and uncertainty in higher education that we present these papers.

Perhaps no aspect of this confusion has more pertinence for the community college than the issue so commonly misstated as "quality versus equality"--misstated because of the assumption of inherent opposition. The issue has special significance for us because the chief reason for our rapid expansion to over 1,000 campusus--with probably 200 more soon to come--is the drive for universal education. That is why it is very important for us to examine the question, "Is universal access hostile to quality?", because if the answer is "Yes," the community college must settle for second class citizenship in the commonwealth of higher education.

But the answer is "No." In fact the question would not even be raised by

thoughtful people if we were careful enough about definition. "Quality" education, as elsewhere, is a relative term. In education the referent is the capacity of the learned. A high quality education is simply one which, through whatever is required--motivation, encouragement, rigor, appropriate expectations and standards and, above all, good teaching--brings out the best the student has to offer. There are indeed serious questions about quality in higher education, even in highly selective universities, but they have to do with such factors as the recruiting, training and encouraging of enough <u>good</u> teachers.

"QUALITY" EDUCATION IS A RELATIVE TERM

Not that the special demands made by equality of opportunity are easy to meet. They aren't. To quote Caryl Haskins, "...there is always before us that most difficult of challenges: how to achieve as great an excellence in training at less as at more ambitious levels. Indeed the evidence is all around us that excellence in the first sector requires at least as much talent and dedication as in the second, and is of extraordinary social significance." Difficult as it is, that is our abiding challenge. Only if we fail to meet it will the result be inferior quality.

On the other hand, open access means equality of opportunity--not necessarily equality of results. People differ in ability as in every other way, and no society in history has ever eliminated the practical results of these differences. We <u>do</u> strive for a society in which there is genuine equality of opportunity, of social justice, of political rights, of recogni-

PEOPLE DIFFER IN ABILIT

tion of human dignity, of freedom from poverty, from disprivilege, or from irrelevant discrimination. But beyond that, no misinterpretation of legitimate "affirmative action," no manipulation of grades, and no other attempts to create an artificial equality where no exists can long prevail. Sooner or later, phoniness destroys itself.

Higher education is closely involved with the drive for equality because it has been identified as perhaps the most important vehicle for upward social mobility. This seems still to be the case in developing countries, but there are many indications that this stimulus may be losing its force in industrial societies, and particularly in the United States. If so, this should be a welcome development for the friends of higher education, even though one result may be some curtailment in enrollment. The effectiveness of college education has been diluted by the presence, in considerable numbers, of students who are there for wrong reasons.

COLLEGE EDUCATION HAS BEEN DILUTED

Many factors are associated with the shift that may now be developing--all of them, it seems to me, educationally and socially desirable. One is the near achievement by blue collar labor of middle class status. Sociologists are finding that "working class" is no longer a useful category in analyzing American society. A second is the declining differential in income between college graduates and others. A third is the near-saturation of the market for those whose only qualification

CHANGING SOCIAL SCENE

is the possession of some college degree or who have prepared for an over-supplied specialty. Associated with this facet, of course, is the radical increase in the proportion of the population graduating from high school, and of high school graduates obtaining college degrees. A fourth factor is the growing insistence, supported by the courts, that criteria for job selection be realistically relevant to the requirements of the job itself.

A related idea that is gaining acceptance both inside and outside of academia is that agencies other than schools should also be involved in certification for employment. The Assembly on University Goals and Governance has even told us recently that colleges should deemphasize their degree-granting function. One of the Assembly's 85 theses, published in 1971, reads in part, "American colleges and universities, responding to public demand, have collaborated in a system of degree certification that makes a mockery of some of their educational objectives. At times it almost appears that the degree-granting function is higher education's principal reason for being."

If and when the full impact of these developments is felt, community colleges and all institutions of higher education will become more fully what they should be: places of learning and not, to quote the Assembly further, "gatekeeper(s) granting 'passports to employ' in professions and callings."

Nothing in the development noted above or in that line of argument belittles the

importance of career education. We will and always should be engaged in both vocational and general education, but under more favorable circumstances we can and should do so with greater clarity and effectiveness in both areas. If we really wish to educate "the whole person" we will do everything we can to avoid exaggerating the distinction between the two. We have not been very successful in this effort. We have often denigrated "skilling" and have allowed "liberal" education to become tinged with an aura of elitism.

EDUCATE THE "WHOLE PERSON"

I wish to turn aside for a moment. I just used the term "elitism" in a perjorative context. This word can be used in a good or a bad sense. Negatively used, it refers to a closed circle of privilege, artificially maintained at the expense of democracy. "Good" elitism, on the other hand, is simply the recognition and reward of genuine merit, without which no society can rise above general mediocrity. It refers to a status that is open to almost all who are willing to invest the effort. In this sense it is possible for almost anyone to belong to some "elite"--for there is not one such, but many. But should we, for example, unwisely limit "career education" to the sharpening of a set of specific skills we would greatly prejudice the learner's chances of identifying with any wider leadership role. Such leadership in the social order must of necessity go to those with broader understandings and relationships-who are, in a good sense, "elite".

"GOOD" ELITISM

General education is a partner, not a rival, of career education. In fact they are intimately related. Expressed in the compressed language of Carl Kaysen, the goal of general education is simply "the formation of informed, inquiring, and critical minds." There is wide agreement that considerations of individual and social welfare give this goal at least as high a priority as that of learning a marketable skill. In fact, without some degree of these qualities attending, no skill is marketable. To the goal of general education we have traditionally devoted much of elementary and high school education as well as the first two years of college. And yet our efforts to establish the status of general education have failed to the degree that the term itself is now in considerable disrepute. The reasons for this unhappy state of affairs are numerous, but six stand out.

THE IMPEDIMENTS OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The first is that like "democracy," "justice," pursuit of happiness" and other inspiring but abstract expressions in our lexicon, "general education" is vague and hard to pin down.

Thus it is hard to find consensus on how a general education is best acquired. In the second place, great differences in individual interests, aptitudes, and needs make the use of any one formula for general education impossible. Third, the outcomes of general education, in contrast to much of vocational education, are hard to measure; and Americans and their surrogates in power have an overwhelming penchant for quanti-

fiable and standardizable results. The current vogue of "measurable behavioral objectives" is not conducive to the realization of many of the goals of general education. Equally deterring is a fourth impediment: the popular tendency to justify public support of education on the ground that it supplies the nation's manpower needs. A fifth difficulty may be attributable, at least in part, to the strong materialist strain in American society. For whatever reason, career education often has more appeal to students of college age than does general education. The student who with clear conscience sleeps through the history of western civilization becomes fully alert in engineering school. And he resents the diversion from his major caused by required breadth courses.

The sixth problem has to do with the structure of higher education itself. For better or for worse, colleges and, particuly, universities have committed themselves to departmentalization and specialization, and the trend shows no signs of abating. General or integrative education depends heavily upon the availability of good teaching at the hands of competent generalists-and neither generalists nor good teachers are consistently encouraged or rewarded in the dominant ethos. In one way or another over-departmentalization and specialization have been involved in the frustration of most of the more ambitious efforts to infuse patterns of general education into college programs.

And so we are confronted by a deep and perplexing dilemma: how to encourage a facet of education that everyone agrees is urgently important but nobody knows how to handle. Of the possible answers that present themselves, four stand out as particularly worthy of special attention.

THERE IS NO PATTERN

First, we must abandon the idea that there is any one best pattern to follow: the vast range of student needs precludes such an assumption. Nor should we be too attached to a name or the concepts associated with it. We should weigh carefully this recent proposal by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education: "While preferring to drop the nomenclature of general education and liberal education, the Commission believes that a concept of a broad learning experience should be maintained. 'General education' emphasized pre-selected content. The Commission believes that instead of that concept-emphasis should be placed on a 'broad learning experience' that would help students confront large bodies of knowledge and large issues. The essence of the approach would be to create several options from among which students may choose. Each option would follow some internal logic that would give it coherence."

HARMONY OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND CAREER EDUCATION

Second, we should more seriously devote ourselves to recognizing the harmony of general and career education by emphasizing their common content. We have not begun to exhaust the possibilities for enriching vocational, technical, and professional education by integrating their broader implications and ramifications, nor have we ade-

quately related general education to career interests.

Third, we should critically re-examine the assumption that general education must precede vocational and professional education or even experience in adult life. General education will be most effective when it is most desired, and all teachers who have worked with more mature adults will testify to their receptivity. And adults are the most rapidly expanding segment of our student population.

Finally, and perhaps most important, we should strengthen and capitalize the particular advantages we in the community colleges have for assisting in the development of "informed, inquiring, and critical minds." General education is our particular province. For example, probably none of us has really exploited the possibilities for enhancing general education inherent in our counseling emphasis. But most important of all, the community colleges are relatively free from the specialization and over-departmentalization and other impediments to good teaching that often afflict senior colleges and universities. And right here is the heart of the matter. General education stands or falls with teaching quality. What in your college experience had most impact? It is extremely likely that it wasn't any activity, and body of subject matter, any laboratory, any book or even the whole library. It was a small number of peers and a bare handful of memorable teachers. That's what made it all worth while. And that's what general education is all about.

GENERAL EDUCATION IS OUR PARTICULAR PROVINCE

NEW ATTITUDE

DR. EARL LOWELL

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With due appreciation of the foregoing, and despite general agreement with the views expressed, I would like to suggest that for some there may be different starting points and a different analysis regarding Career Education and Elitism.

The different starting point for me is the assumption that to deal with career education and elitism we must face the problem of attitude. This may seem remote, but we need to be sensitized to the perspective of the other side of the dichotomy of career education and general liberal arts education. This is not to suggest that this dichotomy can be resolved solely by an attitudinal change, but such a change may be one of the starting points. It is important for us to recognize that the oppressive nature of elitism, as John has defined its negative aspects, may be hindering us from fulfilling our responsibilities as educators.

Those of us who have a general liberal education must begin to recognize the implicit prejudice the system has displayed regarding career education. Those of us with responsibilities for career education must recognize that even our defensiveness may be contributing to the oppression which comes from elitism. This elitism gives false and oppressive privileges to those who have a general liberal education. Three quick examples:

1) We assume that persons with a general liberal education through

life-long learning can learn the necessary skills for employment after they graduate. In fact, it is suggested they may be better trained than if educated in college for a skill. But why are we not able to say that the broader understanding and relationship John describes as the result of a liberal education can also be gained in the world of life and work after the skill is learned in college? Why cannot workers with a formal skill training be in a "good" way part of the elite by virtue of what they have learned external to required courses?

2) Have you ever observed the elite status ranking of an academic procession?

3) Have you ever heard an instructor in a career program say that the career student EVEN earns more than those with a general liberal education? As if money could buy status in academia!

DIFFERENCE IN ABILITY NO ARGUMENT FOR INEQUALITY

While John has affirmed equal opportunity and carefully avoided the assumption of inequality of ability, a direct rejection of that must be asserted in our minds. The difference in abilities should not be used as an argument for inequality. True, false rank and merit do produce a phoniness which will destroy itself. In the same way, if we give false importance and status to one form of education - - career or liberal -- we may be producing a phoniness which will destroy

itself. This may in fact be what happened to general/liberal education in the past decades, and career education may be at the threshold of making the same mistake.

While there is little hope of our eliminating the concept of a career ladder, we need a new attitude which will generate for us an alternative to that concept. The alternative may be an understanding of lateral career development which can bring as much fulfillment to a person as one more step of the traditional career ladder. Obviously such a concept has with it the danger of being a tool to continue the oppression of those who want out of the socio-economic trap. Some day we may need to learn the kind of lesson John V. Lindsay learned as Mayor of New York a few years back when he discovered that those who pick up the garbage may be as vital to the well being and growth of the city and its political future as its educators and teachers.

LATERAL CAREER

I would have to agree with Dale and John that the problem is not just attitude, but also a problem of content - - of breadth of understanding. But elitism often forces us to demand that one content has priority over the other. Russel Thomas in A Search For Liberal Learning suggests that liberal training cannot be seen as either preparatory or terminal. Perhaps the same needs to be said about career education, and the question of content needs to be answered from this perspective. If the dichotomy and pitfalls of elitism are to be avoided, alternatives to course requirements must be found. At the same time, desired

competencies in career skills, broad views and understandings cannot be left to chance. Career faculty and general liberal arts faculty need to think through and develop shared roles as educational facilitators.

This may be difficult to imagine happening in the shafted fortress of education, as William Birenbaum describes higher education. Perhaps the hope and reality of this happening is to be found in our catching up with the beginning of post-secondary, short-term career education in this country. In 1822, an ad for the Gardner Lyceum in the Kennebec News noted that its courses in the science of farming were to be taught "in the field." Community-based education and recognition of externally gained knowledge and developed skills may facilitate the merger of instructional content. The breadth of meaning and life which John sees developed by being with a handful of peers and instructors may also be discovered in the community in which we live and learn. Gimmickry will not remove the specter of elitism from attitude or curriculum design, but new approaches to faculty development, new places, new learnings and new realities will help us find new attitudes, understandings and content for the shared tasks of career education and general liberal education. This may in fact bring a new and broader understanding to the clientele served by the community college.

EXTERNALLY GAINED KNOWLEDGE

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